

And the Winter Sheds His Grief in Snow

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And the Winter Sheds His Grief in Snow

by [amoralagent](#)

Summary

Will woke before noon. It was a rare occurrence. And he preferred if it remained rare. Instead of plying himself out from under the bedcovers, he tried to sleep a while longer, in and out of sloppy dreams for a few hours but woken intermittently. First by the daylight, then noise of a saucepan downstairs, then the rain outside, then a dog barking. His determination was admirable, but the day doubled down, adamant in it's continuation, even in his absence. He pulled the duvet over his head, and hid away, until his own stifling breath and scent suffocated him. The same as submerging himself entirely underwater of a hot bath. His eyes felt like golf balls pushed inside his skull.

On a car ride, Will spots something... abnormal. And it somehow breaks the normality of their relationship, in ways neither of them expected.

Notes

Title: Sympathy by Emily Brontë

Inspired by a couple of scenes in the Girl on the Train, and a small exchange of dialogue from Killing Eve. That's really all it takes, huh? Also wanted to challenge myself to write a realistic argument because that's hard.

Get ready for dogs! And domestic violence! (Sorry...)

Will woke before noon. It was a rare occurrence. And he preferred if it remained rare. Instead of plying himself out from under the bedcovers, he tried to sleep a while longer, in and out of sloppy dreams for a few hours but woken intermittently. First by the daylight, then noise of a saucepan downstairs, then the rain outside, then a dog barking. His determination was admirable, but the day doubled down, adamant in its continuation, even in his absence. He pulled the duvet over his head, and hid away, until his own stifling breath and scent suffocated him. The same as submerging himself entirely underwater of a hot bath. His eyes felt like golf balls pushed inside his skull.

Hannibal came in the room as he was covering himself, wallowing, trying to see how long he could last without oxygen and whether or not it could knock him out. He figured he could potentially befall a good night's sleep that way. The mattress undulated under Hannibal's weight behind him, and he allowed himself a hole in his bedsheets-disguise to let fresh air back in, "Good morning, Will."

Guilt crept up on him like a body of water. Will closed his eyes. Breathed in as big of a lungful as he could, and sighed at length, "Nothing good about it."

Without any animals to respond, and with no genuine reason for doing it, Will had developed the habit of whistling. No melody, or recognisable tune to it, unless Hannibal had been listening to a record a week before. Much to his own surprise, it didn't drive him up the wall. Most of the time.

It was done with the same flippancy and absentmindedness as a child loudly playing on the floor with his toys. Unselfconsciously. He did it privately, when he felt the most secure-announcing his presence around the house, or working on the car, for example. Sometimes he could be heard before he opened the door, returning from a grocery run or a post-hangover walk. If it abruptly stopped, it either meant he caught himself doing it and didn't like it, or he'd noticed something.

So, when he was quietly whistling along to a snippet of the car radio, and immediately silenced himself, Hannibal didn't take his eyes off the road. But he did, when Will turned around in his seat to look back at something in the wing mirror.

"Hannibal."

"Yes?" He seemed confused. What looked like a broken-down car glinted in the rearview.

It was the middle of the day, and warmer than it should've be, so it couldn't have been something outright criminal. That was their job, surely.

He turned off the radio. *Oh, this was serious, then.*

"Turn the car around." The flick of an indicator, and he did as he was told, cruising slowly until they reached the car, "Pull over." He did. Will moved to get out, and he put his hand on

his own seatbelt until, "Stay here."

Leaving him to wonder when exactly he'd gotten so obedient, Will slammed the door shut, and Hannibal watched him greet a lonely man at the trunk of the vehicle, waving a hand, going to see what was wrong. Unsure of Will's plan for this new stranger, Hannibal was glad the road they were on wasn't accustomed to traffic. He went between watching the trees, the road, and trying to translate what Will was talking to this disgruntled man about.

His line of sight was obscured by the grubby windshield and open trunk of the car. The man kept bending down. Will's hand gestured outwards to something. It went on for long enough that Hannibal opened his door and stood in the v of it, one foot out. The looks of recognition he received for doing so were quick glances, one familiar, one startled, and the man seemed to sigh, stressed and gruff. It was lucky the man didn't get scared, giving away whether or not he'd seen Hannibal's face elsewhere. That would've made things... difficult.

He leaned into the trunk again, and Will shook his head at Hannibal, as if to say *no, it's okay*. Reluctantly, and cluelessly, Hannibal got back in the car as Will collected up something in his arms. It wasn't at all apparent what it was until opened the backseat, and Hannibal could smell it.

"Will, we--"

"Yes, we are. Can't take her back now." He pulled out a blanket and wrapped their new passenger in it, "Wouldn't want to." Will raised a hand to the man in thanks, but his smile was tight and untruthful. In turn, the man's eyes only flicked to Hannibal's once before getting in his driver's seat. Maybe he had got scared.

Will slid back in to the passengers seat, his face morphing to a more sincere smile, if a mischievous one. Hannibal looked from him, to the car driving off, to the face of a merely three month old puppy. He sighed, and pulled away from the curb, "We're not keeping her."

"*Oh*, I think we are."

"We shall see." He wasn't the best at identifying dog breeds, but Hannibal knew an attack dog when he saw one. But, the lovely thing seemed more interested in napping, than attacking anything. She'd worn herself out. The only prey he could imagine her sinking her teeth into, would be one of his expensive shoes: "What compelled him to let you take her off his hands?" Mainly because she was sweet, and Will could see Hannibal thought so, "Is she hurt?"

"I don't think so. Her was yelling at her though." He tickled the top of her velvet head as she settled it into the crease of his arm. It'd ached in him to feel how much he'd missed dogs. He was already smitten, "Not far off cruelty, you wouldn't shout at a child like that."

"What for?"

"She was car sick. Should've smelt it."

"I think I can." Hannibal was a little vexed by how natural Will looked with a dog in his lap, like a mother: "As long as she refrains from reenacting."

"We can keep her?" *God, sometimes it was like having a child.* He found himself unable to say no. Will was all too aware of it.

A couple of months later, and Will still hadn't named her. Hannibal reckoned it was because he didn't trust Hannibal's reluctance to have her, and didn't want to fully commit in case she had to go. Nevertheless, he was head-over-heels. She followed him everywhere. He fell asleep on the couch with her, trained her, would've played fetch all day if he could. He'd stopped drinking altogether. Whenever Will was in the room, she'd take up the space right next to him, where Hannibal should've been. It was a delight to witness.

But his tiptoeing was valid. They'd had to give up dogs before, when moving in and out of countries. That had always caused Will to spiral.

Hannibal didn't want to admit that it was probably too late anyway.

Despite the destruction of not one, not two, but five pairs of shoes, all belonging to Hannibal, he didn't skin her alive. Didn't even want to. In fact, her hubris inspired him. Both he and Will shared the shock of it, most notably when she had an accident on the marble bathroom floor, and Hannibal didn't even raise his voice. His tolerance was good, but then, they had owned some nightmares, and she wasn't the worst of them. Will would've gone as far as to say he was *fond* of her.

The Alsatian-cross engaged in a staring contest with him as he was making dinner, eyes up to appear doleful, one ear up, one ear down. Even Hannibal's steely self-control wanted to give out. He was too busy looking at her, and a hand hooked round his middle.

"Will. It's not very wise to sneak up on me, especially when I have knife in my hand." They both knew in actuality that Will had most certainly not snuck up on him- more fool him, for more than a split second, to think he'd remotely come close to getting the drop on Hannibal Lecter- but the words remained the same. Will snatched a piece of carrot he'd yet to dice, and stuck it in his mouth before darting away.

And, as predicted, it earned no stab wounds.

"Oh, yeah. Sure." He grinned, snapping it between his teeth.

"I could've reacted poorly." Poorly?

He spoke around crunching, "You mean, stabbed me?" Wouldn't be the first time felt like the more apt thing to say, but he didn't think about until after the fact.

"Perhaps." He noted, affectless, "I wouldn't risk repeating it. And I wouldn't want to." It seemed that was exactly where his mind went too. Will was charmed.

"But you didn't." Pointedly, Hannibal decided to not look at him when he spoke, and continued to chop vegetables. Will threw some of his carrot to the dog, who caught it, tasted

it, and spat it back out.

Will had lured the resting dog away with a toy and was already headed off elsewhere, but Hannibal looked up anyway, "But I could've."

"But you didn't!"

As it turned out, they had saved the puppy. Technically.

She was reported stolen, and the crudely-made flyers that were put up to announce it, Will only happened upon. They were hidden under layers of important news clippings of political nonsense, and adverts for local church events and bake-sales, and other missing pets. He'd always had to keep an eye out for them when collecting his strays, but he regretted spotting it.

Honestly, he might've ignored it, but the photo showed a little girl holding the tiny puppy in her arms, and it gnawed on his heart.

Hannibal, for his part, wasn't torn up about her departure. Of course, they dropped the puppy off in a crate at the address in the middle of the night. Couldn't risk the identification. But Will stayed waiting across the street in the dark until the door was opened, and he heard the immediacy of their elation. It would make the news. Good job he didn't write an apology letter, but he was upset by not doing so; damn the ever-present threat of the FBI and their handwriting analysis.

Hannibal drove him home, no talking, no sound save the engine, and quiet dribbling of the radio here and there. Not even a whistle. Will scratched at his cheek scar as he held his face in his hand, looking blankly out of the dark windows. Bad signs.

"We can get another dog." A moment of weakness, or sympathy, whatever you want to call it: "If you must."

"If I must?"

"If you want to." He amended, struck by the flatness of his tone. An upset Will was hard to broach; a distant Will even harder. He waited until the radio static fuzzed over the music again, "Did you not name her because you didn't want to get attached?"

"Not like it helped." Will sighed, looking away, fiddling with his ring. Hannibal wanted to hold his hand.

"I would apologise, but such words are rendered meaningless if said too many times."

"Hm." Will considered it, shrugging, "If you love something let it go, right? She's back where she belongs. I don't exactly want her to be, but she's theirs. She'll be okay."

"As will you. I'm sure you can find another one you love the same." Then any dog, really, is what he initially thought. A sucker for strays.

He stopped fiddling with his ring.

"I shouldn't fixate on them. We won't have any house left." He quipped, managing a smile.

Hannibal placed a fleeting hand on his thigh, just a comfort, which was welcomed with a hand placed over it, "I know you shouldn't. But it makes you happier." He took his hand away, turned a corner, "You're more yourself when you have them. You light up in a way you certainly don't with people. You adore them." Will stared down at his leg where his hand had been.

"It's just easier with dogs." He admitted, quiet, resting his head back. Will felt his eyes on him.

"Easier than me?"

"Yes. Very much so." Hannibal smiled, a little, knowing it to be half humour, half offensively honest. He was lucky.

"Love is blindness." He said, simply, "You see the best in your beloved, in spite of, or including, the worst."

Will sighed again, watched the trees speed past in the headlights, looking for anything to run out, or anything that had fatefully done so.

"It distorts things." Will conceded, a tinge of bitterness to it, "Love is the thing you never ask for."

Within the week, Hannibal had been invited to a party, and, as per usual, Will declined to go with him. No matter where they went, anywhere in the world, with any language, or rurality, or climate, he always managed to slide in with the bourgeoisie types. And, no matter where they went, anywhere in the world, Will wanted no part in it. He preferred four-legged company, or none at all (with all but one exception, he added).

A night at the local bar was more his forte. Or, more likely, in the comfort of their own home. Hannibal would come back early having missed his company, or with company of his own- not necessarily what you'd call good company either- or both, and Will would be somewhere along the spectrum of disgracefully drunk.

Six out of ten times, Will would already be asleep. Occasionally he would be aggressive, either out of the blue, or if left in the aftermath of an argument. If they had a guest, it was an entirely different story.

But the rest of the times they would have a clumsy, passionate reunion on the couch, or backed up against the dining table. Sometimes as a hateful act.

A couple of times it had been on the floor, like animals.

The last outcome Hannibal expected was Will to turn up to one of these events, but turn up he did, suddenly, and with blood on his face. The other guests seemed to share Hannibal's concern. But not in a kind way.

He went straight over to Hannibal, or rather-- stumbled, watched him approach, put down his drink, ignored everyone else. It felt like the whole room was looking at them. But Hannibal didn't care, "Will?" Will's bruised knuckles gripped tight onto Hannibal's suit. He didn't walk on stable legs, grumbling as he leant into him, and his own blood streamed into his mouth. Hannibal immediately took his face into his hands, checking him over: "Will, are you--"

"Oh! Who's this?" A woman in the circle piped up, all of them glowing ten shades of intrigued by this abhorrent new arrival, reeking of cheap drink. Hannibal, to put it lightly, was insulted, "One of your patients, perhaps? A friend?"

"Perhaps he's the partner we're always hearing so much about?" A sharp round of laughter.

"Whatever I am, it must be invisible, do you fucking mind?" Will snapped, words spilling. Safe to say they weren't best pleased by that.

"Okay, come with me." His nose had been dislocated, and his intoxication probably wasn't numbing much, but he could still insult people if need be. Quick to anger. Hannibal couldn't help but feel vaguely proud.

He gave him his pocket square to dry his bleeding nose, and herded him on their way through the crowds, into a back corner. Will scowled like a child, "Why do they hear about me?"

"Why did you come here?" He asked, grabbing ice cubes from a champagne bucket, wrapping them in the pocket square, holding it to his face. Will took it, ashamed, swaying, groaning, and glared at the other patrons that swam in his vision like open-mouthed, bug-eyed fish. He leant his forehead against Hannibal's shoulder and closed his eyes. Hannibal held his arms, smelt the booze on him, the sadness. Hated everyone seeing him.

"I don't know, I don't know. I just knew you'd be here." He sounded teary. It felt like his heart was being squeezed by it. Hannibal took his hand, and led him out.

He'd cut a smile into the person who cracked a joke about it when they next met.

Back home, Will did the opposite of settling down. His anger normally simmered down to a tired, weepy nausea that meant vomiting the next morning. Alas. The fight at the bar had triggered a wholly different beast- caused him to get pumped with adrenaline and his own unresolved issues. He would only get worse. But for now he was crude, volatile, and unrivalled in his cruelty. A blunt-force weapon.

This was the only side of him that Hannibal couldn't love. He wouldn't let him.

In his drunken, directionless rage, Hannibal's reassurance and aid did nothing. When he avoided most of his frustrated kissing to bandage his knuckles, and try to wipe his bruised,

bloodshot eyes, Will growled an insult, "You make me sick." And wrestled his hand away, shoving Hannibal hard in the chest when he tried to help. Twice.

It was petty and grouchy, and not atypical at all, until he started getting violent.

"I shouldn't leave you if I'm going to come home to this."

"You shouldn't of married a drunk, then." He spat, still swaying on the spot, punctuating it by pouring yet another drink.

"You aren't a drunk, Will."

"Aren't I?"

"You abuse alcohol. You may even have a mild use disorder," He took off his tie, eyeing him, "But you don't meet the criteria to be an alcoholic, I'm afraid."

"Something I'll have to work towards, then."

"Will."

"What?"

"It's not helping you."

"It's not helping us. That's what it's about." That's what everything's about, all the time, unendingly. His head throbbed, "You're never entirely selfless, don't act like it."

"Despite your tendency to convince yourself otherwise, I do care, Will. Far more than is convenient for the both of us." Hannibal kept his distance, still and patient, like a cobra. Will felt his eyes boring into the side of his head and had the sudden, overwhelming vision to dig his nails into the flesh of those eye sockets, so he didn't ever have to feel it again, "Which, unsurprisingly, leads me to not want you to die. Least of all of alcohol poisoning."

"Not when you're not around?"

"Not ever."

"No, that's right." Will tilted his head at him, a spiteful gesture: "You'd rather kill me yourself."

There it was: his hatred. But he knew, in his sober mind, that they'd been over this before. They'd even made the vows- till death do us part- and he knew that Hannibal didn't want him dead. If that had been the case, he'd would have saved them the recovery, and the travel expenses, and the marital paperwork. And, for his part, Will didn't hate Hannibal. Quite the opposite.

Will didn't care about the killings, and the cannibalism, and the pain- liked it, even. Loved Hannibal regardless. Always had.

But, he could hate himself for that. And, in turn, hate Hannibal.

Hannibal knew it was himself more than anything, at his unhappiness despite their love, despite what they'd both become, for themselves and to each other. Something he should not share, but masked as a righteous, viscous thing, scrabbled it together when mixed up with a glass in his hand. They'd had the same fight many times before, under many different names and levels of anger, and Hannibal had become resigned. He learned to expect it to resurface, come around again in a cycle, like a menstruation or a hurricane.

It was bark, and bite, but they'd suffered worse.

He sighed, "I'm sorry, Will. You're--"

His drink was hurled at his head, and hit the wall with a crack, glass splintering. That, he didn't expect.

"You keep *fucking saying that!* I know you're sorry!"

Hannibal remained still, frozen. The waves of the Atlantic *roared* in Will's mind, louder than his thoughts, breaching everything, broiling under his skin and making his hands shake. He took a breath, stared at Hannibal, who doubled hazily in his vision, then looked to the whiskey, considering drinking from the bottle.

He'd never heard Hannibal raise his voice in anger, and it made him livid. With drink in his veins he wanted to row, and to fight, and to *scream*, when normally he'd be nothing but silent. Snarky, at worst.

He'd changed. But Hannibal remained the same.

"I'm just trying to understand."

"You really are pathetic." Will just looked at him, red wet eyes overtired and angry and drunk, "Fuck you. I don't want your understanding." He grumbled, only coming out as sad. He curled his hands into fists on the worktop in front of him. Unstable. Unsteady. His vision swam with the blood in his head. Fresh scabs on his knuckles and face feeling like they were digging holes into his bones, and he regretted his words, but was too out of it to let apologising cross his mind, "I'm going to bed."

He let go of the bottle, and headed off upstairs. Hannibal followed him, gave him space before inquiring. He just couldn't help himself, "Did you think dredging this up would help you?"

"I don't know." He mumbled, his back to him, gripping the banister so he didn't die. Hannibal would probably catch him.

His want to hurt him didn't wane, and it probably still lingered somewhere within him all the time. He imagined kicking him hard in the chest, and what his body would look like broken at the bottom of the stairs. He'd thought about Hannibal when he kicked the man's teeth in at the bar, the same man who stole that puppy, imagined yanking out his insides with his bare

hands, viscera getting under his nails, and carrying it home for Hannibal to cook up and eat. Saw Hannibal in the roadkill as they drove home. Tasted his own blood in his mouth, and thought of him. Felt such heavy regret and disgust under the weight of his alcohol-fogged mind. And he managed to make himself sick with the thought.

Hannibal's eyes on him made him feel hot and sticky, and like his anger was feasting on his organs. A hard knot tight in his core. And he could feel his presence behind him. Feel his attention.

"Do you feel better?"

"I don't fucking know!" He shouted, meeting those red-flecked, all-seeing eyes in the doorway of their bedroom. He wanted to blind him. He wanted to cry.

Then, suddenly, Hannibal's voice was a plead and a warning: "Will, you need to calm down. Put the--"

He didn't know when he'd grabbed the nearest lamp stand, and didn't think as he swung it towards him: "Don't *fucking* talk to me like that!" And the mirror on the wall smashed in front of him. It sounded like a car crash. His chest heaved, feeling splintered.

Hannibal stood completely still, stunned into silence, and watched him crumple to the floor.

Hannibal shifted again, and Will felt a warm hand push itself up near his ribs, a breach in his cotton armour, and Hannibal nestled up behind him, seemingly unperturbed by the tightness of the space, "You've got a temperature."

Will felt him from his shoulders to the backs of his thighs. The hand on him felt like it would sizzle and melt straight through him, and he wanted it to. But his migraine didn't: "I'm not in the mood."

"You're not in any fitting mood." Hannibal conceded, mouth behind his ear, the hotness of it.

"No."

"Well. Let's all look at the grumpy man in the mornings." He intoned, placing a chaste kiss to the shell of his ear.

Will only hummed lowly, peeking out of the little gap he'd made, seeing only the wall, and the bottom of the swaying red curtains, "I need more sleep."

"You've been trying to do that all afternoon."

"Is there a problem with that?" He could feel Hannibal's small fond smile pressed against the nape of his neck.

"What problem are you having to warrant it?"

"Do you want them in chronological or alphabetical order?" That didn't get any response. He finally gave in and was kind enough to himself to lean back into the embrace. Their feet settled together. Hannibal's hand at his chest moved to below his sternum, and he put his hand on it, ran a fingertip back and forth over it's ring, "You cooked breakfast, didn't you?"

"You didn't come down. It's in the fridge." Will's heart swelled, and he sighed again, softly. He wanted to be able to make it up to him with kisses.

"You could've called me." He mumbled, knowing full-well if Hannibal had actually asked him to come down for food he would've refused him anyway: "Should've dragged me out of bed for it."

"I have a feeling that would've made you more likely to hide how you are now, for a much longer period."

"I'm not hiding."

"Ah, yes. You're *sleeping*."

"Trying to." He said, eyes half-lidded, the smell of their bed around him like a fog. As equally as he wanted to be enveloped by the mattress, he wanted to scrub it clean. Clean of them, of their sex. Clean of him. He was on two sides about everything they were. It would clear up with his hangover, but it was tormenting.

Out of politeness- and fear of sounding like a broken record- Hannibal didn't offer medication or methodology to treat his issues. He only sighed, breath tickling the back of Will's shoulder, and twined their fingers together. It only lasted a moment, until Will let go of his hand.

"I'm sorry, Will."

"Why?"

"I'm sorry that I can't make you happy." It landed like a bullet. Instead of being said with whimsy and selfish sadness, it was said with purpose. Practicality. He meant it sorrowfully, and Will wanted to take that bit out of him, and burn it to ash.

"Don't be stupid. Just-- don't." He said, taking his hand again and holding it to his chest. He felt the coldness of Hannibal's ring, "I should be the one apologising."

"There's no need."

"But I am."

"You *were* drunk."

"I don't care. There were things I shouldn't have said." Will held onto his hand tighter, "I'm sorry." He didn't like admitting that, no matter the truth of it, but he finally relaxed the tension in his body. Pressing back for a moment, sighing again. A smile crept up on him: "I wouldn't blame you for smothering me right now."

Hannibal let out a low chuckle, pressing his head to his, holding him, "I'm not angry with you. I was with the whiskey." It ended up down the sink. Good riddance, Will supposed.

"No, I'd welcome it." He huffed a laugh, wanting to cradle his aching head, "Be a good way to go. Any moment now, please."

"How much longer before I have to say my goodbyes, I wonder?"

Will turned his head, eyes warm, wanting nothing more than to melt into him. Crawl inside him. Learn to shape-shift. Hannibal met his gaze, kissed his shoulder, "All the time I have to give." Twisting round, Will kissed him. And he was happy to be kissed back.

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